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SEVENTH REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

I. INTRODUCTION

1. By paragraph 3 of its resolution 1230 (1999) of 26 February 1999, the Security Council decided to review every 45 days, on the basis of reports of the Secretary-General, the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) in the light of the progress achieved towards implementation of commitments made by the President of the Central African Republic to the Secretary-General in his letter dated 23 January 1999 (S/1999/98, annex).

2. In accordance with paragraph 18 of resolution 1230 (1999), the first report thereafter was submitted to the Council on 14 April 1999 (S/1999/416) and the second on 28 May (S/1999/621). The present report describes developments in the Central African Republic since the end of May.

II. POLITICAL ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Armed clashes and unrest in Bangui

3. On 19 June, an altercation broke out at the cattle market on the outskirts of Bangui between a group of cattle herdsmen of Chadian origin and some Central African citizens. As a result of the subsequent intervention of elements of the presidential guard, FORSDIR (Special Force for the Defence of Republican Institutions), at least five Chadians and one FORSDIR member were killed. MINURCA deployed to control the situation by separating the Chadians and the Central Africans.

4. On 22 June, Central African students at the University of Bangui went on a rampage attacking Chadian students. The attacks were inspired by a rumour, later proved false, that Chadian students at the University of N'Djamena had attacked Central Africans studying there. The situation was contained by the Central African police and gendarmes, assisted by some MINURCA troops. Police and gendarmes, as well as MINURCA units, were also deployed to restore calm

after a riot on 26 June, which started when a Central African tried to rob a Chadian merchant in his shop.

5. Following the incident of 19 June, my Special Representative, Oluyemi Adeniji, met urgently with the Prime Minister, Anicet Dologuele. Mr. Adeniji recalled that the maintenance of law and order was the function of police officers and gendarmerie, and not of FORSDIR. He also recalled the explicit undertakings made by President Patassé in his letter to the Secretary-General dated 23 January 1999 concerning the restriction of FORSDIR to its mandate to protect republican institutions and the high authorities of the State. He further recalled that the Security Council had welcomed the President's commitment in its resolution 1230 (1999). Had the incident in question been dealt with by the police or gendarmerie, who had the necessary training to deal with the civilian population, loss of life could have been avoided.

6. The Prime Minister admitted that the situation had got out of control because of the way in which it had been handled, and expressed appreciation for the role played by MINURCA in restoring calm. It was also agreed that my Special Representative should meet with President Patassé and senior Government officials to discuss measures to replace FORSDIR officials now performing police functions with officers who had received human rights and other civilian police training from MINURCA.

7. Following the return of President Patassé to Bangui, my Special Representative met with him in the presence of some of his Ministers. My Special Representative raised in particular the issue of the persistent discharge by FORSDIR of functions that properly belonged to other arms of the security forces. He called on the President to meet the commitments made in his letter to me dated 23 January 1999 and immediately to take the following steps:

(a) To withdraw FORSDIR from Bangui airport;

(b) To withdraw FORSDIR from border posts;

(c) To prevent FORSDIR from performing law and order duties which should be performed exclusively by the police and the gendarmerie, except in an emergency.

8. In his reply, President Patassé said that FORSDIR was the only loyal and operational arm of the security forces on which he could rely. He categorically stated that he could not take any of the measures recommended by my Special Representative except at risk to his own safety.

III. PREPARATIONS FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

9. On 5 July, President Patassé issued a decree proclaiming that the first round of the elections would be held on 29 August. The second round, if there is one, will be held on 19 September.

Activities of the Mixed and Independent Electoral Commission

10. Since its inauguration, the Mixed and Independent Electoral Commission has adopted a budget for the elections in the amount of CFAF 1.9 billion (approximately $3 million). The Government of the Central African Republic has budgeted a sum of CFAF 1 billion for the elections. Of that, it has recently deposited CFAF 500 million into an escrow account from which the Commission can draw as necessary. In several meetings with the group of donors in Bangui, coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the following pledges have been made to the budget: Japan CFAF 187 million (already paid in full); United States of America $120,000 (already paid in full); European Union CFAF 450 million; UNDP $200,000; and France CFAF 300 million. Egypt has donated two computers for the operation of the Commission. The Commission subsequently prepared a supplementary budget for the operation of the control organ to be established to ensure the transparency of its work at the sous-prefecture level. It is hoped that donors will contribute to that budget.

11. After some delay, the Commission has finally developed an operational plan for the revision of the electoral lists and distribution of the voter cards, with the assistance of the electoral unit of MINURCA. The printing of the revised electoral lists has advanced. Although the operational plan envisaged the deployment of the Commission members to the provinces on 24 June to check the electoral lists, there was some delay, and the first group left Bangui on 3 July. They are expected to complete their work and return to Bangui with authentic electoral lists by 31 July.

12. Tenders have been launched for the printing of the voter cards and ballot papers, which are to be produced locally. The printing of these materials is being funded by the European Union.

13. In the view of the MINURCA electoral unit, which has been working very closely with the Commission, the dates fixed for the elections can be met only if the Commission avoids further delays in its operations. This point is being constantly stressed in the Bureau of the Commission.

Political parties

14. Preparations for the elections by the political parties have commenced slowly. So far four candidates have been selected by their parties. These are President Patassé by the Movement for the Liberation of the Central African People (MLPC), General Kolingba by the Rally for Democracy in the Central African Republic (RDC), Charles Massi by the Democratic Forum (FODEM) and Jean-Paul Ngoupande by the National Unity Party (PUN). On 10 July, an independent candidate, Fidele Gouandjika, also declared his candidacy, and more candidates are expected to emerge.

Electoral support by the Mission

15. MINURCA has carried out reconnaissance missions to the eight permanent and two temporary electoral sites in the countryside. Deployment of troops to the sites is to commence late in July in accordance with the concept of operations described in paragraph 22 of my sixth report on MINURCA (S/1999/621). The

Governments of Canada and Egypt have agreed to make available the services of 32 communications specialists and 68 logistics personnel to provide essential services to the Mission in this respect.

16. Preparations for electoral observation by MINURCA are being pursued. Nine of the 30 long-term observers have arrived in Bangui, and the remaining 21 long-term observers are due to arrive around 10 July. After training and briefing, 21 will be deployed to the 8 permanent sites starting from 17 July, while the remaining 9 will operate in Bangui.

17. Besides the long-term observers, MINURCA plans to deploy 200 short-term observers for an intensive observation of the polling period, starting 14 days before the first round of voting, and the same number for the second round, if required. Of the 200 observers to be deployed, almost half would be recruited locally from MINURCA, UNDP, embassies, consulates, non-governmental organizations and other international organizations in the country, while the remaining 100 would be drawn from United Nations Headquarters and other United Nations offices, predominantly in Africa and Europe.

18. In my report of 28 May to the Security Council (S/1999/621) reference was made to the Central African armed forces troops to be deployed in support of the election under United Nations supervision and rules of engagement. These troops, who will number 360, are now being selected for deployment by MINURCA. Of that number, 240 would be deployed to the electoral sites, and 120 would remain in Bangui as a quick reaction capability and to guard sensitive electoral materials. The Government of France has agreed to allow its contribution to the trust fund established to support the activities of MINURCA, amounting to some $638,000, to be expended for this purpose.

Information

19. On 23 June, MINURCA conducted a press conference devoted in part to the violent incidents described above, and the role played by MINURCA in helping to contain them. Questions were asked concerning the Mission's Chadian contingent, whose role has been questioned in some quarters of the local media. Media representatives were reassured that MINURCA and its Chadian contingent were acting in a neutral and impartial manner to help maintain the stability of the country.

20. In the light of the forthcoming presidential elections, Radio MINURCA has increased its broadcasts on electoral sensitization. Regular slots have commenced for broadcasts by the electoral commission and the MINURCA electoral unit. The acquisition of a short-wave transmitter is under way to enable the population in the provinces and other remote areas of the country to listen to Radio MINURCA programmes.

IV. HUMAN RIGHTS

21. The violent incidents involving the Chadian community described above have created a climate of widespread fear and insecurity among civilians, as well as considerable disquiet over the lack of respect for human rights. The incidents

underline the issue of the misuse of FORSDIR, the feelings of persecution among the Chadian population in Bangui and the general disquiet of the Muslim community.

22. The question of impunity for human rights violations continues to remain a serious concern. The situation in prisons is critical and many detainees are being kept in police and gendarmerie cells for unduly long periods owing to a shortage of prison cells. The head of the MINURCA human rights section has met with the Minister of Justice, who agreed that MINURCA could conduct regular visits to the prison in Bangui as well as monitor conditions in police cells. Such activities will feature as a priority in the future human rights programme.

23. As mentioned in my last report, MINURCA, together with Ministry of Justice, organized a national human rights seminar from 31 May to 2 June 1999, on the impact of human rights on national reconstruction. The seminar, which was funded by UNDP, attracted some 200 participants from all segments of the population. In addition, the human rights mass awareness campaign on Radio MINURCA continued to ensure a widespread dissemination of human rights concepts.

V. MILITARY AND SECURITY ASPECTS

Need to strengthen security

24. During the first few days of June, more than 2,000 Chadian troops transited through Bangui from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where they had been deployed in support of that country's Government against the rebels (see S/1999/621, paras. 29-30). The Chadians withdrew pursuant to the Sirte agreement of 18 April 1999, apparently without untoward incident, and were monitored by MINURCA throughout their passage through Bangui and its environs.

25. However, the violent incidents described above have contributed to a notable rise in tension in Bangui over both the increase in anti-Chadian feeling and the misuse of FORSDIR. In all three incidents, the rapid deployment of MINURCA helped to defuse the situation.

26. Tensions have also risen following the seizure of Gbadolite, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, by rebel troops early in July. After the fall of Gbadolite, about 5,000 Congolese Government troops fled into the territory of the Central African Republic. They surrendered their weapons to the local military authorities of the Central African Republic in the border villages in the vicinity of Mobaye, to be guarded jointly by Congolese and Central African troops.

27. On 7 July, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, citing the defence agreement between the two countries, sent a delegation to Bangui to request the Government of the Central African Republic to facilitate the re-entry into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, through Central African Republic territory, of the troops and their weapons. The request was apparently related to plans for a counter-offensive against the rebels.

28. President Patassé has reportedly informed the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the rebel movement concerned, the Mouvement pour la libération du Congo (MLC), that he has no intention of allowing his country to become involved in the conflict in that country, and has cited Security Council resolution 1230 (1999) in support of his position. He has asserted that the Congolese troops, having surrendered their arms, now have the right to decide whether or not to return, in consultation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross. The Congolese delegation, accompanied by the Central African Republic Ministers of Defence and the Interior, later interviewed the soldiers.

29. On being consulted by the Government, my Special Representative advised him that the weapons brought into the Central African Republic by the soldiers should remain under Central African Republic control until such time as they can be restored to the Democratic Republic of the Congo pursuant to an eventual peace agreement. Mr. Adeniji has also offered the assistance of MINURCA in conducting an inventory of the weapons and verifying their security.

30. Jean Pierre Bemba, the leader of MLC, the Congolese rebel movement active along the border of the Central African Republic, has reportedly warned President Patassé against taking any action against the movement. Mr. Bemba was also reported as stating that, had it not been for the presence of MINURCA, his forces would have entered Central African Republic territory in hot pursuit of the fleeing Government troops.

31. In my last report (para. 25) I notified the Security Council that, if the security situation during the tense period leading up to the elections were to deteriorate, I would not hesitate to recommend to the Council an increase in the current force structure to ensure the safety of United Nations personnel and operations in support of the elections.

32. At that time, it was envisaged that the additional 100 military personnel required to provide communications and logistical support to the elections could be accommodated within the current force levels. However, in view of the deterioration in security arising from the developments of 19 and 22 June and the entry into the Central African Republic of the Congolese troops, additional steps are required to ensure the security of United Nations personnel. This is especially important in respect of the international electoral observers to be deployed near the border where the rebels have enjoyed recent successes. It is envisaged that this would require the deployment of an additional 148 troops. This figure includes the crew of the 16 armoured vehicles requested in my last report.

Disarmament and the destruction of weapons

33. On 9 July, in a ceremony conducted by my Special Representative, MINURCA destroyed a batch of 151 weapons, including both heavy and light arms collected partly by the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements and partly by MINURCA itself. The destruction of the weapons in a ceremony attended by senior Government officials and members of civil society helped to build confidence and, to some extent, to allay fears that had been expressed regarding the influx of weapons into the country.

Civilian police component

34. The civilian police component of MINURCA continues to assist, within the framework of resolution 1159 (1998) of 27 March 1998, in the training of the Central African Republic national police and gendarmerie. The seventh training session for 46 officers of the gendarmerie (25 brigade commanders and 21 special intervention task force) is currently in progress, as is the first training programme for 180 fresh recruits for the police force. It should be recalled that the two earlier training courses for the police involved the retraining of police officers, who have not benefited from such courses in 20 years.

VI. RESTRUCTURING AND DEMOBILIZATION OF THE ARMED FORCES

35. The four bills on the restructuring of the armed forces which were adopted by the National Assembly on 3 May 1999 have not been promulgated into law by President Patassé in spite of the persistent efforts of my Special Representative. The President insists he cannot promulgate the laws until the Constitutional Court to which they were referred has confirmed that they are all in conformity with the Constitution. This step will further delay the process.

36. Notwithstanding the delays, MINURCA continued its training seminar for officers of the Central African armed forces on the role of t e military in a democratic system (see S/1999/621, para. 36).

37. The retirement of 630 elements of the Central African armed forces, which will open the way for the process of restructuring, has not been effected. However, in discussions with the President and Prime Minister, my Special Representative has been assured that the Government has set aside the sum of CFAF 300 million to pay the salary arrears and retirement benefits of the first 300 military personnel to be retired. Their payment and service records are being examined for action. My Special Representative has been assured that this first batch should be able to depart on retirement soon. The second batch of 330 will be dealt with later in the year as Government finances improve to provide for payment of their arrears and retirement benefits.

Special Force for the Defence of Republican Institutions

38. The delay in the restructuring programme has further highlighted the issue of FORSDIR, which continues to perform the duties that properly belong to other arms of the security forces. This anomalous and potentially explosive situation symbolizes the continuing distrust of the regular army by the President. However, while FORSDIR may give confidence to the authorities, its current method of functioning is a cause of deep concern not only to the opposition but also to the population in general. In keeping with the expectations of the Security Council on the issue, as expressed in paragraph 12 (b) of resolution 1230 (1999), and as follow-up to President Patassé's undertakings, my Special Representative is continuing to press for FORSDIR to be confined to its legitimate duties.

Demobilization

39. On 23 and 24 June 1999 UNDP convened a meeting of donors in Bangui on the demobilization and reinsertion of members of the armed forces. The donor meeting, which was aimed at mobilizing the $3.1 million required for the programme, was attended by Austria, Canada, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Japan, Morocco and the United States of America, as well as the European Union, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the African Development Bank.

40. At the meeting, the Government of the Central African Republic presented three papers, on policy and strategy for a republican army in a development and democratic setting; on a national programme for demobilization and reintegration; and on self-employment and security through arms collecting. It was disclosed that army restructuring would need external financial support of $505,000 for the period from July to December 1999 and $8,044,096 for the period 2000-2001.

41. So far, donors have made no commitment other than to accept the principle of maintaining and enhancing dialogue with the Government on the search for ways and means to effect the restructuring of the armed and security forces. Since funds cannot be mobilized, UNDP is uncertain about the fate of this important project.

Post-Mission presence

42. By paragraph 17 of its resolution 1230 (1999), the Security Council requested me to consider, in keeping with the statement of its President of 29 December 1998 (S/PRST/1998/38), what role the United Nations might play in the transition from peacekeeping to post-conflict peace-building in the Central African Republic, and further requested me, in consultation with the Government of the Central African Republic, to submit recommendations on a possible United Nations presence in that country after the termination of MINURCA. My report of 28 May contained some preliminary indications along these lines.

43. In that report (S/1999/621) I also stated that detailed recommendations to the Security Council would be subject to the result of the presidential election and the developing situation in the country.

44. However, since my last report, developments in several areas crucial to the maintenance of a secure environment after the departure of MINURCA have not been satisfactory. In particular, the laws on the restructuring of the armed forces have not yet been promulgated and the Government has failed to restrain FORSDIR from assuming law and order functions beyond its mandate.

45. Any United Nations presence in the Central African Republic after MINURCA will achieve its objective only if the Central African Republic authorities show commitment by implementing agreed reform measures. The Security Council might therefore wish to consider what measures it can take to persuade the Government of the Central African Republic to fulfil the commitments which formed the basis for the establishment of MINURCA in the first place. It is crucial, moreover,

that the Government should take the necessary steps described above before the termination of the mandate of MINURCA.

VII. ECONOMIC ASPECTS

46. On 2 July, Alassane D. Ouattara, Deputy Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, announced that the Executive Board of IMF had met that day to assess progress under the Central African Republic's economic and financial programme supported by the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF), and completed the mid-term review under the first annual ESAF arrangement. As a result, an additional SDR 8.24 million (about $11 million) of IMF resources have now been made available to the Central African Republic.

47. The Directors stressed that the successful implementation of the financial programme, including the clearance of external and domestic arrears, would hinge crucially on a sustained increase in budget revenue and the timely implementation of agreed measures. They recommended that the authorities raise revenue by broadening the tax base, improving tax administration and combating fraud, and welcomed the authorities' intention to implement further fiscal reforms in order to strengthen revenue collection. They encouraged the authorities to monitor the budget execution carefully, and to adhere to their expenditure priorities.

48. The Directors endorsed the authorities' commitment to completing the structural reforms launched in 1998 in the public enterprise sector, particularly in the cotton sector, and to improving the legal and regulatory framework for private sector activity. They stressed the need for the Central African Republic authorities to strengthen their implementation capacity in those areas and to improve the delivery of basic services in education and health, so as to bring the country on to a path of sustainable development and reduce poverty.

49. Nonetheless, the Government is still failing to pay on time all the salaries and benefits for which it is responsible. On 7 July, a group of students, some armed with stones, protested about the six-month delay in paying them their scholarship awards and had to be dispersed with the use of tear gas. The Prime Minister subsequently met with the students and promised to settle their claims.

VIII. FINANCIAL ASPECTS

50. The General Assembly, by its resolution 53/238 of 8 June 1999, appropriated an amount of $33.4 million for the operation of MINURCA for the period from 1 July to 15 November 1999 and its subsequent liquidation and administrative closing until 30 June 2000. With regard to the estimated costs associated with the supportive role that MINURCA has been authorized to play in the conduct of presidential elections, I have requested authorization from the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to enter into commitments to incur additional expenditure in the amount of $6.7 million in connection with electoral support. These additional requirements will be incorporated in the

revised budget for MINURCA that I shall submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session.

51. Should the Council approve my recommendation contained in paragraph 55 below as to the increase of the strength of MINURCA to 1,498 contingent personnel through the deployment of an additional 148 troops, I shall determine the related requirements when the deployment schedule is finalized and shall seek additional resources from the General Assembly accordingly.

52. As at 30 June 1999, unpaid assessed contributions to the MINURCA special account amounted to $15.3 million. Total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at that date amounted to $1,549.7 million.

53. With regard to the trust fund established on 20 April 1998 for the support of the activities of MINURCA, contributions as at 30 June 1999 totalled $0.87 million, while expenditures amounted to $0.12 million. As indicated in paragraph 18 above, the contribution to the trust fund from the Government of France would be used during the elections period to support the deployment of the Central African armed forces troops.

IX. OBSERVATIONS

54. The sudden upsurge in tension in Bangui arising from a series of incidents involving the Chadian community is a serious cause of concern as the country approaches the presidential elections. Parties preparing for the elections have begun to exchange mutual accusations of non-democratic behaviour and the amassing of arms.

55. Bearing in mind security considerations, including those arising from the recent capture of Gbadolite by Congolese rebels and the flight of thousands of Congolese Government troops into the Central African Republic, I believe it essential to increase the strength of MINURCA through the deployment of an additional 148 troops, bringing the authorized total of the military component to 1,498 all ranks. This figure would also include the additional communications and logistical personnel essential to the support of the elections (see S/1999/621). Consequently, the Security Council may wish to approve the slightly higher force level in order to allow MINURCA to ensure the security of United Nations personnel and electoral operations.

56. The delay in the promulgation of the laws on restructuring the Central African armed forces is cause for concern. As the legal basis for the restructuring programme, the fact that these laws have still not been promulgated casts doubt on the commitment of President Patassé to the reform process in this vital area.

57. The lack of progress in confining FORSDIR to its statutory duties is a source of continuing insecurity among the civilian population, especially foreigners. It is also a source of great disappointment that President Patassé should have informed my Special Representative that he had no intention of taking any of the concrete steps proposed to him on this question. This attitude is inconsistent with the spirit displayed in President Patassé's letter

to me dated 23 January 1999, which was subsequently endorsed by the Council in resolution 1230 (1999). I wish to propose that the Security Council consider additional steps aimed at encouraging President Patassé to fulfil the commitments he has made.

58. The decision by IMF to make available to the Central African Republic an additional SDR 8.24 million in the context of the mid-term review of the first annual ESAF arrangement is very welcome. The Board's relatively favourable review of the economic situation of the Central African Republic, however, must be set against the additional arrears accumulated by the Government and the delays in implementing reform measures. The recommendations of the IMF Board for revenue enhancement and further fiscal reforms should be closely heeded.

59. The much-needed bilateral support provided or pledged to the electoral process by the Governments of Egypt, France, Japan and the United States and by the European Union and UNDP is to be commended. It is hoped that other Member States and international organizations will contribute to the budget of the Electoral Commission. The agreement by the Governments of Canada and Egypt to deploy communications and logistics personnel to the Mission provides MINURCA with indispensable support in its electoral activities.

60. My next report is scheduled to be submitted to the Council at the end of August. However, since the first round of the election will now be held on 29 August and the results will not be available at that time, I would propose, with the consent of the Council, to submit my next report on the situation in the Central African Republic on 30 September.

61. Lastly, I wish to express appreciation to my Special Representative and to the Force Commander, Major General Barthélémy Ratanga (Gabon), and to all the personnel of MINURCA for their efforts during the reporting period.

United Nations Mission in Central African Republic: contributions as at 15 July 1999

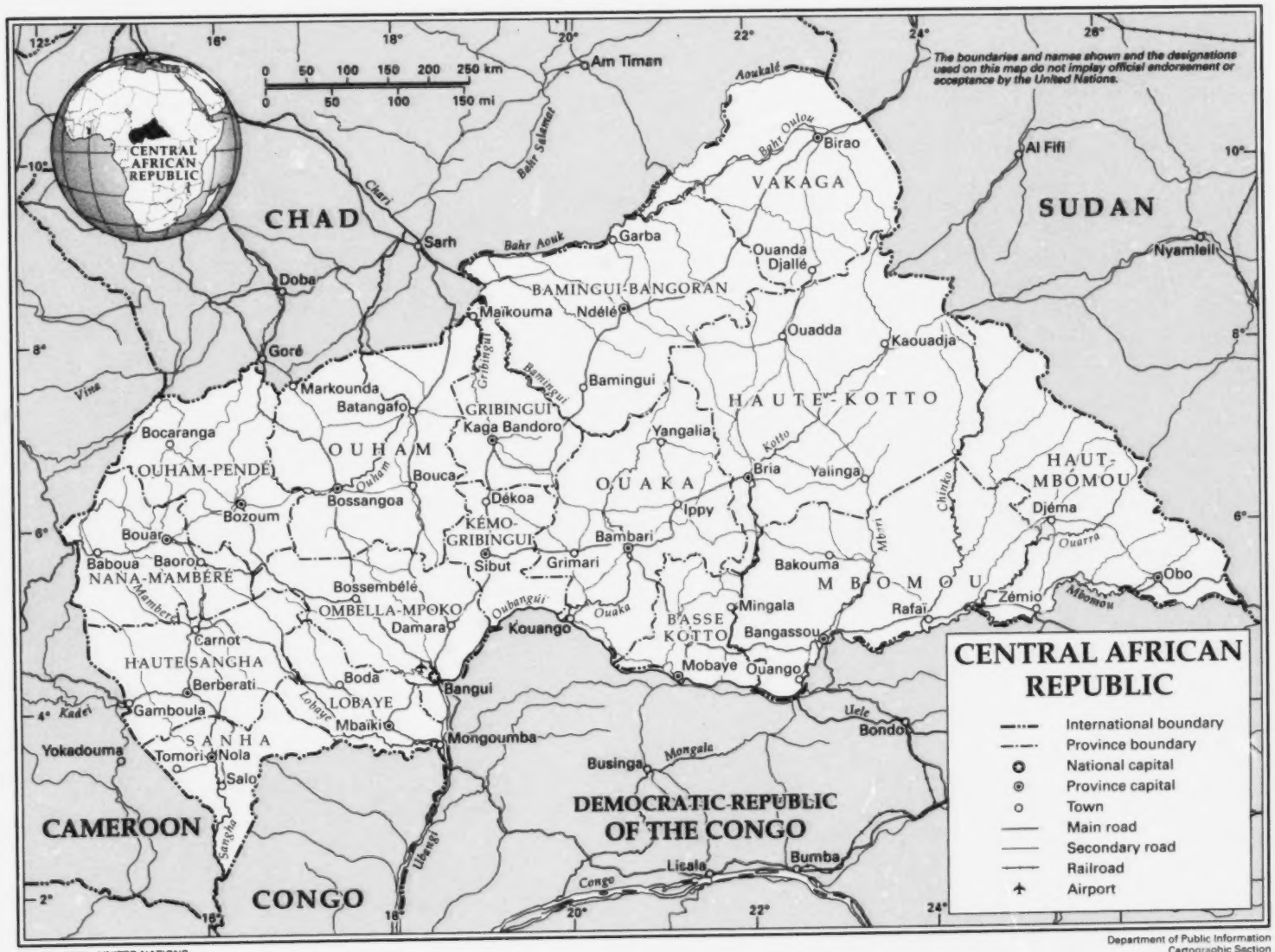
Country	Staff observers	Support unit	Troops	Total
Burkina Faso	6		120	126
Canada	4	25	-	29[a]
Chad	6	-	120	126
Côte d'Ivoire	10	15	210	235
Egypt	8	200	120	328
Gabon	8	-	120	128[b]
Senegal	9	-	120	129
Togo	6	-	120	126
Total	57	240	930	1 227[c]

[a] Not including national support elements (22).

[b] In addition to the Force Commander.

[c] In addition to 24 civilian police observers from Benin (2), Cameroon (1), Côte d'Ivoire (1), France (7), Mali (6), Portugal (2), Senegal (3) and Tunisia (2).

The authorized strength of the military component is 1,350. The current deployment total is 1,227. The available strength of 123 comes from the withdrawal of the Mali contingent (120 troops + 3 staff positions).



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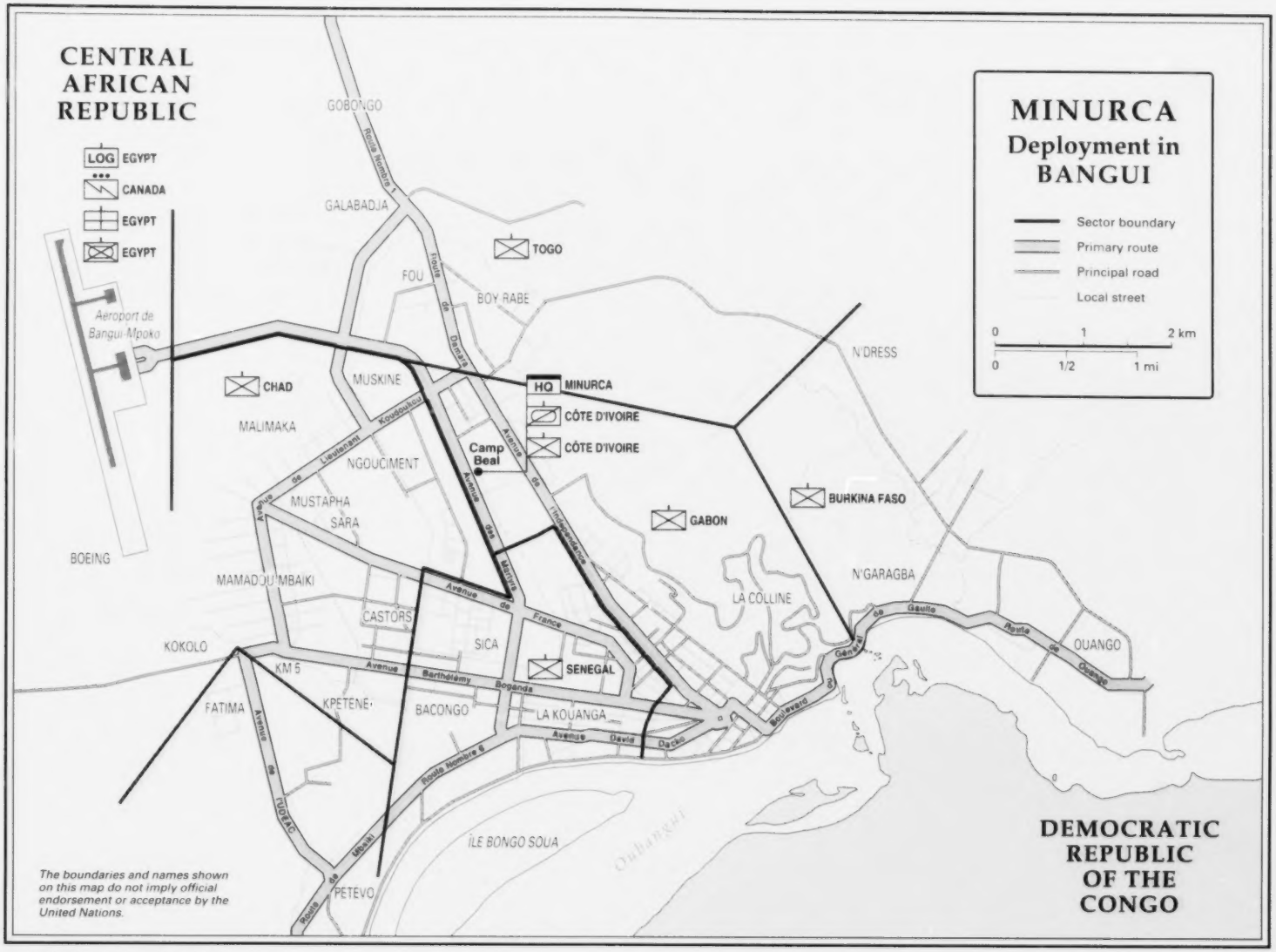

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